

Frequently Asked Questions about Student Assessment Data

Updated March 21, 2016



What data is collected when a student takes a state test?

Basic student information and student test scores are collected. Basic student information includes the student's name, Alaska student ID number, and specific demographic information. EED does not collect sensitive information such as physical addresses, mailing addresses, or Social Security numbers.

How does EED use the data?

Individual student test data is provided to the student's school district and teacher to provide information about how the student performed on the test and how the school can provide instructional support for the student. Only authorized school district staff that have a legitimate educational interest (such as the student's teacher or principal) may see a student's data. No individual student data is reported publicly. Data is aggregated for public reporting by providing counts or percentages of students scoring at each achievement level on the tests. This aggregated data that is not personally identifiable is used to report on the overall performance of groups of students in the School Report Card. These aggregate reports fulfill EED's reporting requirements under state and federal law without the need to identify individual students.

How the data will not be used!

EED does not report individual student data to the federal government or to private parties. EED never sells individual student data. Individual student information is not used by third-party vendors to solicit goods and services. When data groups are so small that individual students could be identified, data is suppressed and either reported as a range (e.g., 60% or more, 40% or fewer) or not reported at all with a note stating that there are too few students to allow for reporting.

What does EED do to protect student data?

All student data is stored and transmitted securely. Within EED, only the Assessments and Information Technology staff have direct access to individual student data for the purposes of collecting, analyzing and reporting data. These staff sign agreements to keep data confidential and are well versed in FERPA, the federal law that governs individual student data in much the same way as HIPAA does with medical records. Data received from the testing vendor and school districts are transmitted using secured connections and stored within EED's secure data servers. Likewise, any individual student data that needs to be transmitted from EED is sent via encrypted e-mail or through a secure data connection.

Is there any difference in student data collected and reported from the Alaska Measures of Progress (AMP) assessments than from the previous state assessment, the Standards Based Assessment (SBA), or other state assessments?

No. The same type of student data that is collected from the Alaska Measures of Progress (AMP) assessments are those that have been collected for many years on the SBAs and other statewide assessments.

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Is the data from the Alaska Measures of Progress test being sent to ANSWERS, the statewide longitudinal data system operated by the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE)?

No results from the Alaska Measures of Progress (AMP) tests have been sent to ANSWERS. There are no current plans to provide AMP data from 2015 or 2016 to ANSWERS.

What is a longitudinal data system (LDS)?

A longitudinal data system (LDS) collects data over a period of years. A P-20W LDS collects data from early education through college and/or work. A P-20W LDS allows EED, school districts, the university system, and the Department of Labor to have information about Alaska's students and how successful they are in college or postsecondary training and in securing work. For example, 30% of recent Alaska high school graduates have required remedial courses when they enrolled in the University of Alaska system. Data from an LDS will help schools and districts improve the educational system to ensure that Alaska's students are college, career, and culturally ready upon graduation. Any data reported publicly from an LDS would be reported in the aggregate for groups of students, not for individual students.

What is the status of the ANSWERS statewide longitudinal data system?

The development and testing of ANSWERS is scheduled to be completed by June, 2016. The development has been funded by a federal grant. Future implementation of ANSWERS is pending additional funding.

Is a student penalized if a parent does not allow the student to take the AMP test?

No. The AMP and other state tests are not used for grades, promotion, or graduation from high school. The results are used to show how well the students are meeting state standards and to provide information to schools to help improve instruction.

Is a school penalized if parents do not allow students to take the AMP test?

A school may receive a lower rating or other consequence through the state accountability system such as a requirement to create a school improvement plan. The new law, ESSA, makes it clear that any state or local laws about parents' right to have their students participate in the tests are not overturned by the federal law. The ESSA does require the state to "provide a clear and understandable explanation of how the state will factor the 95% participation requirement ... into the statewide accountability system."

Will a school, district, or state Title I funding be affected if the 95% participation rate is not met?

Both state and federal law require schools, districts, and states to ensure that tests are provided for all students and that no students are excluded from the test. It is possible that Title I funding could be affected if schools and districts are not making efforts to ensure that all parents understand why the tests are given and why it is important for all students to take the tests. Before funding is affected, districts would be required to make a plan for meeting the participation rate.